

Testimony of Tom Swan

Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG)

Before the Government Administration and Election Committee

In regards to HB 6904 AAC Appointment of Registrars of Voters

March 9, 2015

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, and other distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG). On behalf of CCAG's member families I want to thank you for raising HB 6904 AAC Appointment of Registrar of Voters and to applaud the courage of Secretary of the State Merrill to propose to professionalize registrars' offices. With this weekend's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Selma march we are reminded of the sanctity of the vote and the importance of us evolving to protect this right.

The problems related to the Hartford registrar this past November and in Bridgeport four years earlier speak to the urgency of us figuring something out here. We recognize that being a registrar is often a thankless task and that most registrars do an excellent job. We also realize that registrars are active in our communities and that many will oppose changes to the current system. That does not mean that the legislature should keep the status quo.

As stated earlier, we applaud the Secretary of the State's call to professionalize the functions that are currently fulfilled by registrars. We support that call and think that whatever changes are adopted need to have the confidence of the voters and whatever selection and oversight mechanisms are adopted need to make sure the position is not subject to political games.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you to figure out how we protect the integrity of Connecticut elections.